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AUTHOR Hooghoff, Hans
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes social and political education in the Netherlands ("maatschappijleer") since the introduction of the subject in 1968. Points discussed include historical developments, the national curriculum project for "maatschappijleer," goals and content, government educational policy, and the position of East-West relations in the curriculum. Political decisions recently taken in the Netherlands are crucial to the future development of the content and structure of education. This also is true for political education. In other European countries such as England and Scotland, there is a tendency in educational policy towards core curricula, national criteria, grade related criteria, and nationwide tests. This paper concludes with thoughts on the position and significance of East-West relations in the curriculum and suggestions for more international cooperation and coordination. (Author)

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drs. Hans Hooghoff

National Institute for Curriculum Development

Box 2041

7500 CA Enschede

The Netherlands

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SO 020 926

Instituut voor Leerplanontwikkeling

Beltstraat 44
7511 JW Enschede
Postbus 204
7500 CA Enschede
Telefoon (053) 84 84 40
Telex 72964
Postgiro 32 96 043

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes social and political education in the Netherlands ("maatschappijleer") since the introduction of the subject in 1968.

Points to be discussed are historical developments, the national curriculum project for "maatschappijleer", goal and content, government educational policy, and the position of East-West relations in the curriculum.

Political decisions recently taken in the Netherlands are crucial to the future development of the content and structure of education. This also goes for political education. In other European countries, too, such as England and Scotland, there is a tendency in educational policy towards core curricula, national criteria, grade related criteria and nationwide tests.

This paper is concluded with a few thoughts on the position and significance of East-West relations in the curriculum, and suggestions for more international cooperation and coordination.

1. Stages in the development of social and political education

1.1 1945-1968: Introduction

After the Second World War, various political and social groups strove for "socialization" of education. This socialization was to manifest itself in the attention schools devoted to social aspects of life and civic education. The Secondary Education Act of 1963 secured a place for "maatschappijleer" in all secondary school timetables. The actual

introduction of the subject was in 1968. The development of the subject in vocational education was fairly autonomous. In a number of vocational school types, the subject was already included in the schedule.

The government remained vague as to the goals, content of "maatschappijleer" describing it as follows: *"discussion of current issues, giving some knowledge of and insight into relations between individuals and groups."* The subject was to be given form and content within the schools. Unfortunately, the government failed to specify the necessary qualifications for teachers and set up teacher training courses. Nor were the necessary teaching materials available.

1.2 1968-1976: Confrontation of opinions

In the early years, teachers of "maatschappijleer" and especially social scientists were the ones to search for frameworks for the subject. This process was impeded by con cting interests and ideas. Teachers did not devote explicit attention to the aims of the subject. Their job was to teach, and they looked for content to go with a very general goal: *"to offer knowledge of and insight into the main aspects of life in community ans society."* Topics varied widely, depending on what teachers and pupils were interested in, what the pupils' future tasks and responsibilities were, and the extent to which values and standards were involved.

Social scientists, on the other hand, tried to formulate explicitly the goals and content of "maatschappijleer". With a number of teachers, they established the Dutch Maatschappijleer Teachers' Association (NVLM). The universities defined the goals of the subject as follows: *"Maatschappijleer is social and political education which implies knowledge, insight, attitudes and skills with regard to social en political structures and processes."*

- the question to what extent teachers' beliefs should be reflected in the lessons;
- the role the subject could play in the innovation of didactics and content in the entire field of education
- the scientific basis of the subject.

The government shifted discussion of these points of controversy to the Committee for the Modernization of the Maatschappijleer Curriculum. The establishment of this committee in 1970 marked the beginning of increasing government intervention, which would eventually lead to general consensus in this field.

1.3 *1976-1983: The Turning Point*

In this period, more and more general agreement was reached as to goals, content and methods. A number of disputes was settled: "maatschappijleer" was to be a subject among subjects, the basic sciences underlying it sociology, politics, and cultural anthropology. The government took an increasingly active part in the definition of content and development of curricula. One of the factors stimulating this process was the establishment of a National Institute for Curriculum Development, which had positive effects for many subjects. The content of the Guidelines for teacher training colleges and other memoranda was integrated by the project team of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) in the document "View on Maatschappijleer" in 1981 (a final version appearing in 1983). In writing this paper, the project team consulted various specialists in this subject field, the Dutch Maatschappijleer Teachers' Association and the Catholic and Protestant Educational Advisory Committees. It offers a widely accepted view of goals, content and form of the subject. This document was one of the elements underlying government proposals

for the Experimental Final Examination for Maatschappijleer. It was parliament that took the first step towards an experimental final examination. The Study Group on the Final Examination for maatschappijleer submitted an advice to the minister of Education and Science in 1983. This advice has brought clarity and minimum consensus concerning the subject, which appears from the expressions of approval from teachers and teacher training colleges.

1.4 1983-present: The body of knowledge and national criteria

In the present phase, work is being at a national level on the further development of the subject's content. The National Institute for Curriculum Development has designed recommendations at national and school curriculum level. Consultations are taking place, and proposals are being drawn up for a basic programme for 12 to 16-year-olds. Since early 1985, a Structuring Committee for "maatschappijleer" has been working on a final examination programme for lower vocational education, lower general secondary education and higher general secondary/pre-university education.

Summary

After a very pragmatic oriented practice at classroom-level followed by a period of many academics disputes on a more theoretical level with a strong social-critical strain, not the least thanks to governmental action there has grown much more clarity and consensus about goals and content of social and political education.

So, legitimation has been achieved. All the energy now has to be turned to the task of implementation to promote and guarantee the quality of social and political education.

2. The National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO), its tas and function, the maatschappijleer project.

The youngest of Dutch educational institutes is the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) in Enschede, a governmental organization established in 1975.

The National Institute for Curriculum Development renders services in the field of curriculum development. These services consist mainly of the development and publication of model curricula. These publications contain ideas, suggestions and examples which may help teachers and school teams to solve curriculum problems. SLO products are the result of close cooperation with teachers in the field.

Education is forever in the making. Over the past decades changes seem to be coming faster and faster. At the same time, planning is receiving increasing attention in education, which is reflected in curricula. Many schools have a great deal of know-how in this field themselves, and are quite capable of making the necessary changes in their teaching without help. Sometimes, however, the changes are so sweeping and complex that the know-how within the schools is insufficient. In these cases, they could use a "helping hand". Putting it plainly, it is the SLO's job to lend them this helping hand in the form of all sorts of model curricula.

Society is always making new demands on education: human rights education, consumer education, development education, East-West relations etc. etc.

Getting down to essentials, the questions involved here are those connected with the planning, organization and content of education.

Helping schools with questions about curricula by offering mode.

curricula: in short, this is the main task of the National Institute for Curriculum Development. In practice, this implies the publication of a wide variety of written matter for various subjects and school types.

In the SLO's range of publications, three main groups are to be distinguished. These groups correspond to the three levels at which educational planning takes place:

- in the classroom, mostly by the teacher;
- in the school, usually by the staff as a whole (often together with parents and board);
- nationally, by governemnt and parliament (often after consulting various social groups and organizations).

For each of these levels, the SLO writes model publications, namely, teaching kits, school curricula and core curricula.

Practicality is an important demand that SLO publications must meet. To achieve this, each of the approximately hundred SLO projects involves close cooperation with a number of project schools and an additional, larger group of follow-up schools. In these schools, the material developed is field-tested before it is made available to other schools.

At the moment, about 300 people are permanently employed by the National Institute for Curriculum Development. The regular budget for 1987 runs to 35 million guilders. This basic budget varies each calendary year with a view to additional projects undertaken at the request of ther ministries or the private sector. An example is a 5-year project on Third World studies, financed by the Ministry of Development Aid, with an annual budget of 2 million guilders (1986-1991). Cooperation is also sought with institutions abroad, such as Stanford University in California, the Social Studies Centre in

Bloomington, USA, the Association for Teaching Social Sciences (U.K.), etc. (a survey can be supplied on request).

2.1 The SLO curriculum project for "maatschappijleer"

Within the social sciences department of the National Institute for Curriculum Development (covering the school subjects geography, history, economics, "maatschappijleer", health education, development education, etc.), a project team for "maatschappijleer" has been working since 1981 on a curriculum for this subject, to be used for 14 to 16-year-olds in lower vocational and lower general secondary eduation. The Dutch Maatschappijleer Teachers' Association had requested such a project. In general terms, the aims of the project can be defined as follows:

- an advice for a core curriculum for maatschappijleer in lower vocational and lower general secondary education;
- examples of a subject curriculum for maatschappijleer in lower vocational and lower general secondary education;
- experimental teaching kits as examples for working out parts of the subject curriculum into lesson plans.

A close-to school strategy

In its request for the national project, the Maatschappijleer Teachers' Association stresses the principle of close cooperation with teachers. This desire coincided with SLO principles.

Together, teachers and the project team set out a development strategy, within which teachers were to play a decisive role. Three phases are to be distinguished in the project strategy, and with each phase, a greater circle of teachers is involved.

1. The development phase with the development circle (1981-1983).
2. The resonance phase with the resonance circle (1983-1985).

3. The follow-up phase with the follow-up circle (1985-1987/88).

The phases start one after the other at two-year intervals. At the beginning of the development phase, the emphasis is on development work at classroom level with so-called development teachers. With the project team, these teachers form the development circle. The development circle brings forward the first project products in the form of "rough drafts". These rough drafts are passed on the resonance circle, which is formed around the development circle after two years. The development teachers remain part of the resonance circle, in which rough drafts are tested and adjusted. This results in "draft models", whose transferability and suitability as models (= examples) is studied in the follow-up circle.

In the period 1981-1985, a serie of publications was produced under the heading social and political education. Some of these publications are of a theoretical nature (for example: "View on maatschappijleer" and "Learning and teaching"). Others offer very practical guidelines, such as tips for a serie of lessons on a particular theme (like the familiy, mass media, crime) or a handbook for the planning of "maatschappijleer".

In august 1985, the follow-up phase was started. Forty schools participated this time, some of the teachers also having been involved in earlier circles. This final phase, which also includes an external evaluation test, does not concentrate solely on the usefulness and effects of curricula developed earlier. The definition and description of a balanced and coherent basic programme is at least as important, the so-called communal education offered to 14 to 16-years-olds. By the end of 1987, the project team must submit a final report, giving a cost-benefit analysis of the curriculum strategy pursued and assessing the value and significance of the publications at various curriculum levels.

From 1986-1988 research is being done on the usefulness of SLO teaching

kits and the tension between desired and actual curriculum in the classroom. The emphasis will be on the operational curriculum as delivered by the teachers. In relation to that, there will be data collection about the planning approach, the learner results and the more general implementation situation of the teachers.

3. Goal and content of social and political education today

3.1

As far as content is concerned, two significant trends are to be discerned in the Netherlands at the moment. The Structuring Committee for maatschappijleer examinations has defined the subject matter for three themes:

- political decision-making
- mass media
- man and labour.

The subject matter has been defined unambiguously in national criteria which means that the minimum level pupils must reach is specified in full detail. The first nationwide experimental examiniation for maatschappijleer will be held in May 1987. In 1992, the government will make its final decision as to the necessity of a final examination in maatschappijleer at a national level. This delay is connected with a new content and structure being devised for secondary education for pupils from 12 to 15/16 in the Netherlands, so-called basic programme for secondary education.

The SLO project team for maatschappijleer is adding the finishing touches to a core curriculum or basic programme for social and political education. This programme, aimed at pupils between 12 and 15/16, describes goals, content and grade related criteria. These national criteria contain a cognitive and a behavioural component ("the pupil can name three causes of...."), and specify the minimum of

knowledge and skills the pupils must have acquired by the end of the maatschappijleer course. The basic programme for social and political education covers 80% of the total lesson time (80 hours), and is compulsary. The examination is meant to add depth to the basic programme, and extra lessons are reserved to prepare for it. Legitimation of the basic programme is already being sought by asking teacher training colleges, organizations, government, scientists and teachers for their comments. A basic programme enhances not only the uniformity, internal consistency and quality of social and political studies, but also its status and implementation. Parents, teachers and pupils are thus given something to go by, and moreover such a basic programme may help fight the preconceived notion that the subject is "all chinwag, unscientific and unrewarding".

3.2 The aims of social en political education

With the general goal below we wish to make clear what the maatschappijleer teacher is aiming at. It is a curriculum goal which gives the teacher something to go by. A general goal for maatschappijleer in lower vocational and lower general secondary education has been formulated as follows:

"The aim of maatschappijleer is to develop knowledge and skills in the pupils, enabling them to cope with current social and political phenomena and problems critically and creatively on the basis of relevant and reliable information."

This general goals can be split up into several components:

a. knowledge and skills/the ability to cope

b. critically and creatively

c. social and political phenomena and problems

d. relevant and reliable information

a. *Knowledge and skills/the ability to cope*

Every teaching-learning process aims at achieving a certain type of pupil behaviour. Maatschappijleer, for example, aims to equip pupils for forming a reasoned opinion of their own with regard to social and political phenomena and problems. The knowledge and skills offered by maatschappijleer to cope with social and political phenomena and problems are necessary preliminaries to the desired behaviour. Coping is made possible by means of:

- insight into the interdependence between one's own experiences, questions and opinions and the relationships and problems characteristic of society;
- insight into one's own standards and values, views and interests, and into those of other people and groups with regard to the abovementioned relationships and problems;
- insight into the changeability and stubbornness of these social relationships and the solvability of these problems;
- skills in gathering information on social problems and phenomena and in applying this information, enabling pupils to be socially active if they so wish.

The pupils' own experiences, opinions and questions necessarily entail standards, values and interests. Coping also implies that pupils learn to recognize these in themselves. The step towards also recognizing the standards, values and interests of others is then a logical one, particularly because social problems involve conflicting standards, values and interests. Recognizing one's own standards, values and interests and those of others is important in order to gain insight into what certain groups deem desirable for society and the solution of

its problems. This is essential if one is to learn to cope with social problems and view the changeability of these problems realistically. Overoptimism and undue pessimism with regard to social change can thus be avoided.

b. Critically and creatively

"Critically and creatively" refers to:

- the way social phenomena and problems are sometimes taken for granted
- the relation between thought and action
- the distinction between facts and opinions
- the necessity of studying various points of view.

Studying problems and phenomena from various points of view, analysing motives, and distinguishing facts from opinions are guiding principles in maatschappijleer. In other words this is called "faculty of well-founded political judgement" or "awaking of critical awareness". Criticality and creativity go hand in hand here. If we are to teach pupils to question what is taken for granted, this also implies that we wish to stimulate them to look at social phenomena and problems from various points of view and to be open to the various solutions put forward for social problems, before making a choice for themselves.

c. Social and political phenomena and problems

"Social phenomena and problems" are the object of social and political education. The "social" aspect of these phenomena and problems lies in the fact that they

- have to do with people living together in groups
- involve conflicting standards, values, interests and views.

Maatschappijleer, therefore, is not concerned with the strictly personal problems of individuals, however interesting these may be, but

in the way people form their society together. Forming society and taking decisions about it is done in various places. Sometimes people take these matters into their own hands. In other words, the topic is on the social agenda. Sometimes authority is transferred to an institution specially established for this purpose: politics.
By politics, we mean "government policy, its realization and its effects". If a phenomenon or problem connected with people's living together becomes the subject of government policy, in other words, appears on the political agenda, then it is considered a political phenomenon or problem. Politics is thus a special decision-making process with regard to social phenomena and problems.

d. Relevant and reliable information

In order to form a reasoned opinion on social and political phenomena and problems, one needs relevant and reliable information. In other words, pupils must be given instruments with which they can assess the quality of information. This implies that pupils should learn:

- what is meant by the validity, reliability and currency of information
- to tell the difference between information on "what is" and "what should be"
- to gather information about various views on social and political phenomena and problems.

Validity, realiability and currency are criteria characteristics of social scientific inquiry. In a basic programme for lower general secondary education, a discussion of representativity of information will suffice. This could make it clear to pupils what value should be attached to their own opinion, to a class survey, or to a

"representative" opinion poll, and they learn to rate statistic data at their true value.

3.3 The content of social and political education

In answering the question what determines the content of maatschappijleer, three points should be taken into account:

- the demand of the pupil to be equipped in such a way that he or she is able to find his or her own place in society, for example by knowing about phenomena and problems and having formed an opinion about them;
- the demand of society for well-equipped people, who can function adequately in society and are able to cope with the phenomena and problems encountered in society;
- the instruments offered by the social sciences for analysing social and political phenomena and problems.

These three things are also reflected in the general goal given above: "the pupils are able to cope with" indicates a need to learn on the part of the pupils. "Learn to cope with current social and political phenomena and problems" refers to a demand on the part of society, namely that pupils should have insight into these phenomena and problems: how decisions are made in society with regard to these matters and what rules are involved in this process. Overemphasis of this aspect leads to "adapting maatschappijleer", in which the pupils' information of opinions is pushed into the background. "On the basis of relevant and reliable information" has to do with the scientific instruments offered particularly by the social sciences for analysing social and political phenomena and problems.

In other words: if a balanced body of subject matter is to be

determined for maatschappijleer, all these criteria implicit in the general goal must be taken into account. Ways of realizing this are:

a) to work thematically, which means that social and political phenomena and problems are presented in a context the pupils understand;

b) to distinguish thematic fields, thus imposing a structure on social and political phenomena and problmes and meeting the demand from society;

c) to use approaches and key concepts borrowed from the social sciences in analysing social and political phenomena and problems.

a) *The thematic approach*

The thematic approach starts form the familiar, concentrating on phenomena and problems the pupils can recognice, which are part of everyday life. Obviously, maatschappijleer goes beyond the pupils' everyday experiences, but it places them in their social context. In this way, the subject is both true-to-life and new and meaningful for the pupils. The significance of the latter should not be underestimated. Maatschappijleer lessons which fail to transcend the pupils' everyday experiences will soon be scorned as "old hat", and will contribute to the prejudice that maatschappijleer is "a subject you learn nothing from".

b) The thematic fields

Proceeding from the aims of the subject, we are faced with the choice which social and political phenomena and problems are to be discussed, and how these are to be ordered. Or, putting it differently, which criterium/criteria should be used to specify fields of subject matter. The criterium of "the social agenda" will take us far, but not far enough.

Merely glancing through the newspaper yields a miscellany of social and political issues. In maatschappijleer, we have chosen to order subject matter in thematic fields, with a view to structuring social problems and presenting them in a way pupils can understand. Although maatschappijleer is among the youngest of Dutch school subjects, this ordering principle, which has become almost traditional in our own field, is being adopted for more and more other subjects. A thematic fiels is a frame-work for mapping out social and politiccal phenomena and problems which ca be recogniced and viewed in their interlinking relations. The following thematic-fields can be regarded as a concrete ordening of the day-to-day reality of teachers situations:

1. Education	family, relations, mass media
2. Living environment	cultural minorities, environment
3. Work and leisure	unemployment, social benefits
4. Technology and society	privacy, the information society
5. State and society	political decision-making, crime and criminal law, parlementary democracy
6. International relations	North-South, East-West issues European studies

c) Approaches

By determining the thematic fields it has been made clear what kind of social and political phenomena and problems are to be discussed in maatschappijleer. Still unexplained is how this is to be done, what instruments are to be used. Social and political phenomena and problems are thus analysed:

1. a) form the points of view of the various social groups;

   b) proceeding from the question what interests and relations of

power and authority (and corresponding positions) are involved;

c) proceeding from the question what standards, values and expectations underlie one's own actions and those of others;

d) proceeding from the question what goals and means are involved in one's own actions and those of others;

2. against the background of the development of the phenomenon or problem under scrutiny;

3. in comparison to similary problems in different societies.

The following key concepts are used in the approach: (views of) groups, power, authority, position, standards, values, expectations, goals, means.

"Attached" to these key concepts or combinations thereof are orther concepts, which must be discussed in lessons on concrete themes. For example, it is obvious that power and authority are connected with decision-making, that standards and values are adopted from reference groups, etc. Besides these key concepts, which form a network along with other concepts, there are thematic manifestations of these concepts and exclusively theme-specific concepts.

4. East-West relations in the curriculum (Netherlands)

4.1

Over de past twenty years, society and education have shown an increasing interest in world politics. This has been accompanied by widening opportunities for social and political studies within education. In this period, much has been done by institutions, organizations and groups to bring the issue of war and peace to the fore in education. Measures taken in this context have been:

- writing teaching material about aspects of this issue;
- stimulating curriculum development;

- informing schools and teachers;
- supporting and guiding schools.

The government recognizes the importance of teaching about war and peace problems. Since the mid-seventies, ministers have expressed this on various occasions, such as the educational conferences of the Atlantic Commission. The government also cooperates in information campaignes on these problems through the Public Relations departments of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs.
In connection with a symposium held in 1986, an inventory was made of publications since the end of the sixties. This inventory reflects the large amount of work done over de past decades and shows that teaching material has been developed on aspects of the war and peace issue.

4.2

A number of structural problems are to be observed:

a. There is only limited cooperation between the institutions and organizations, their work does not influence teaching methods in current use.

b. Mainly due to the political sensitivity of the war and peace issue and to the absence of consensus in these matters, the government has held itself aloof from initiatives to give discussion of this issue a permanent place in education. This has made it difficult to finance these initiatives.

c. The opportunities for integrating a new field of attention into existing education are limited, owing to the structure of education and to all sorts of new trends, particularly comprehensive secondary education.

4.3 Recommendations to improve the position of East-West relations in the curriculum at a national level (the Netherlands)

- A first step is for institutions and organizations active in the development of curricula and teaching material concerning East-West relations to join forces, and share as much as possible the know-how and experience they have with regard to content and teaching methodology.
- A basic curriculum proposal for East-West relations should be developed, geared to and distributed over the four social subjects geography, history, maatschappijleer and economics, and aimed at pupils from 12 to 15/16.
- A quantitative and qualitative analysis should be made of existing lesson material which can be used in secondary education, covering both commercial and non-commercial publications.
- Examination papers and programmes should be checked for "East-West" topics over the past five years, to give and idea of the extent and the content of teaching about these matters.
- Efforts should be geared to current national developments such as compulsory comprehensive secondary education.
- Broad support should be obtained for East-West relations in education.

5. Ideas for international collaboration in the field of political education

- Documentation of national and European educational publications making basic statements on political education.
- Inventory and analysis of political education curricula in East and West with a view to making comparative studies and improving the quality of existing curricula.

- **Contacts with important opinion leaders** in Europe, in order to obtain more support from national authorities and the European Ministries of Education for research, training and implementation with regard to political education in Europe.
- **Establishment of a research programme** concentrating mainly on the effects of political education and executed entirely of partially as a joint European project.
- Taking stock of the possible subsidies to be obtained in Europe, to be able to actually carry out various types of projects.
- Establishment of a platform or central group of experts serving as a think-tank for long-range planning and drafting a plan of action for the International Political Science Association.
- Coordination of present developments and activities on a European scale with a view to sharing knowledge and information.
- Establishments of a European Coordination Centre for political education.

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